

Franklin, Tennessee

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Communities across the country have opted to introduce pedestrian-oriented zoning provisions into their zoning and land use regulations to foster increased community walkability. This study identifies best practices and lessons learned in adopting and implementing New Urbanist and pedestrian-oriented zoning. Information for each community was gleaned through key informant interviews with planning officials and documentary/Internet research. Fifteen communities across the United States were selected as case studies for this project from a larger, nationwide study of pedestrian-oriented zoning; profiles were developed for 13 out of the 15 communities and are presented herein.

Current Pedestrian-Oriented Planning and Zoning Provisions

Currently, the City of Franklin's planning and development is determined by four layers of zoning: the base zoning district which determines the general use and density of the land, such as multi-family housing or commercial uses; the overlay zoning district that may apply additional building standards or supersede regulations found in the base zoning district; the character area overlay district, a distinction that addresses specific design and functions of particular portions of the community, and; the development standards layer which determines areas of traditional or conventional zoning overlays. Development patterns in the [traditional zoning overlay districts](#) are modeled after the vibrant American Main Streets of 19th and early 20th centuries. These pedestrian-oriented overlay zones promote transit-oriented and mixed-use developments, human-scaled buildings, and a modified grid street to support connectivity.

Two base zoning districts that support pedestrian-orientation are the [Specific Development-Residential](#) and [Specific Development-Variety](#) districts. Both promote compact, mixed-use developments as well as bike and pedestrian connectivity.

The [Envision Franklin](#) long-range plan, adopted in 2017, is currently guiding the implementation process of new pedestrian-oriented development guidelines and zoning in the City of Franklin. The plan intends to simplify the zoning code and development process to foster vibrant, pedestrian-scaled community areas. Envision Franklin includes several [design concepts](#) which detail the guiding principles and vision for specific districts in the city. The [Neighborhood Mixed-Use design concept](#) covers two of the city's master planned communities, [Westhaven](#)



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and [Berry Farms](#). These communities promote a mix of uses and foster pedestrian activity with the inclusion of plazas, connected and walkable blocks, and bicycle amenities. [Fifth Avenue North](#) and [Main Street](#) are additional design concepts that seek to promote mixed-use, moderate-density, and pedestrian-amenity rich developments. These design concepts are strategically placed to connect community gathering places to residential neighborhoods. The city is currently drafting a new zoning ordinance to implement the recommendations in Envision Franklin.

The Catalyst for Adopting Planning and Zoning Changes

Franklin resolved to simplify its zoning and planning process in order to facilitate streamlined development of vibrant, pedestrian-friendly community areas. Further, the city sought to develop in a way that would establish walkable connections between all relevant land uses in the community, such as parks, shops, schools, and residential neighborhoods.

Perceived Impacts of Pedestrian-Oriented Planning Initiatives

Increased Connectivity

As a result of planning initiatives concurrent with the adoption of Envision Franklin and the Master Parks Plan, the city conducted a downtown riverfront trail study. These two plans and the trail study led to the development of the Harpeth River Trail which seeks to connect neighborhoods to downtown Franklin with a continuous bike and pedestrian trail. Additionally, city-wide connectivity has increased as a result of the efforts of mixed-use developers who understanding walkability is key to creating vibrant and exceptional places.

Increased Resident Interest in Connected Communities

In response to the high priority placed on walkable connections in the new master planned communities, some residents have expressed their interest in purchasing a home within the new developments as they specifically favor the increased connectivity of neighborhoods like Westhaven and Berry Farms compared to less connected neighborhoods.

Increased Walkability & Active Transportation

Key-informants have observed higher walking rates along new sidewalk development and within pedestrian-oriented neighborhoods and along the newly completed Murfreesboro Road sidewalk project. Additionally, within the master planned community, Westhaven, the increased demand for bike parking at the neighborhood school resulted in the construction of several additional bike racks.

FRANKLIN DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE	
Total Population	72,990
Median Household Income	\$92,589
Median Age	38.1
% Households with related children <18	37.2%
% White (non-Hispanic)	85.5%
% Black (non-Hispanic)	5.9%
% Hispanic	7.0%
Average Temperature December/July	40/78°F
Source: Census Bureau, American Community Survey (2013-2017); The Weather Channel, 2019	



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Lessons Learned & Recommendations

Planning officials in the City of Franklin identified key lessons learned in the process of adopting pedestrian-oriented zoning provisions, as well as overarching recommendations for other communities who may wish to explore similar zoning provisions.

COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDER SUPPORT IS KEY

When developing Envision Franklin, the pedestrian-oriented long-range plan, city leaders noted residents' stated priority: trails and sidewalk development. Citizen advisory groups like Friends of Franklin Park and Chestnut Bend assisted in vital outreach initiatives regarding Envision Franklin including fundraising, strategic planning, and building community momentum. In addition to resident support, planning officials note the benefits of having an engaged and supportive local government towards the promotion of a pedestrian-oriented city.

DEVELOP FROM INSIDE-OUT

One of the best strategies for pedestrian-oriented zoning implementation is to focus development within the core of the city. Promoting increased mixed-use and higher density development within 16 block central corridor of the city while maintaining its historic character proved to be a positive approach.

CHALLENGES

Franklin city leaders worked with the community to address opposition over the placement of newly approved trails and sidewalk development. In some cases, residents expressed concerns of crime as a result of trails in close proximity to their homes. City officials provided education on the benefits of these community amenities such as increased property value and connectivity.

SUGGESTED CITATION

A Reimann and JF Chriqui. Pedestrian-oriented Zoning in Action: A Community Snapshot-Franklin, Tennessee. Chicago, IL: Illinois Prevention Research Center, 2019. Available: <https://go.uic.edu/zoning-for-walkability-profile-Franklin>.

Resources for Further Information

Berry Farms, Mixed-Use Master Planned Community

<https://berryfarmstn.com/>

City of Franklin, Envision Franklin

<https://www.franklintn.gov/government/departments-k-z/planning-and-sustainability/long-range-planning/envision-franklin>

City of Franklin, Envision Franklin, Design Concepts

<http://web.franklintn.gov/FlippingBook/EnvisionFranklin/24/index.html>

City of Franklin Zoning Ordinance, 5.1: Traditional and Conventional Area Standards Distinguished

<https://www.franklintn.gov/home/showdocument?id=24135>

City of Franklin Zoning Ordinance, 3.2.2 Specific Development-Residential, Specific Development-Variety

<https://www.franklintn.gov/home/showdocument?id=24135>

Harpeth River Greenway, Rails to Trails Conservancy

<https://www.trailink.com/trail/harpeth-river-greenway/>

West Haven, Master Planned Community

<https://westhaventn.com/>